

3 Proposed Solutions

3.1 On-site Training by Manager

Being trained by an intern's supervisor can be a fast way for an intern to learn procedures. Most managers know the corporate way of doing things and in many cases have been in the position of the interns that work for them, making them great teachers. This is similar to mentoring with the added value of having the intern develop a professional relationship with his or her manager/supervisor, aiding the intern to be integrated into the Chamber and developing a corporate identity under supervision of another employee. This despite the myriad of apparent advantages, there is a huge drawback that makes this a difficult long-term solution to the problem: managers leave the organization.

As it was my case, the manager I was assigned to started working the same day as myself and would therefore reply with “let me ask/ask someone else” to several of my questions. This is caused by the lack of record of corporate procedures and organization of knowledge and in companies with high levels of personnel turnover this can be a devastating loss of know-how and make a difficult standardization of procedures. This was also evident when dealing with the Corporate Shared Drive; as every single employee and staff member, past and present, had a way of organizing files that proved difficult to decipher and manage.

3.2 On-site Training by Human Resources Manager

Another consideration is the possibility of creating a department to deal with interns and other employees. Interns would benefit from having an experienced member of the staff to rely on for information and to be properly introduced to the corporate culture and procedures as well as other staff members. Human Resources managers also tend to be better qualified to teach procedures than other managers who might have little experience with working with temporary personnel and inexperienced interns.

However the creation of a new department would imply a cost in space and economic resources that small businesses could find unattractive, as being an unpaid workforce is one of the main advantages of hiring interns. Another disadvantage is that there would be little for Human Resource managers to do after the intern has been successfully integrated in a small business if training were his/her primary role.

3.3 Create an Intern Handbook

Creating a handbook or manual specifically aimed for the interns can be a good long-term solution. It can reduce the time it takes for an intern to be capable of completing its tasks, as well as providing opportunity to assign more tasks once they become proficient at doing them. It gives them a “welcome” to the organization even before they arrive to the office on the first day, as well as

provide all the necessary background about GWHCC. The interns can learn corporate culture and have a companion of frequently asked questions to help them integrate into the Chamber. It would also help standardize several procedures that vary greatly to this day, provide clear guidelines to complete tasks, help define the roles of interns and training goals and more importantly, keep the know-how within the organization.

In addition, the handbook can help create guidelines for the employee manuals after a procedure or task has been researched and modified as well as create work descriptions that fit better the actual jobs, in particular for interested students that might apply for internships in the Chamber.

Using Mindtools' *Managing Interns* (Mindtools Business Management team, 2011), I weighed the cost and benefits of creating an intern handbook: the cost is relatively small (an estimated 10-12 hours for the creation of the first draft) compared to the amount of time spent on interns learning basic skills and corporate culture.

The disadvantage of this solution is that resources would be needed to create one: whether it is the time needed to write it, the research needed, the input of several staff members and the continuous need to upgrade and update it, some managers might not feel inclined to have the interns spend hours working on it instead of completing their daily tasks. An even worse situation could occur if a handbook is created but it is not regularly updated: this would lead to misleading the interns, creating confusion and therefore detracting from its intended use.

3.4 Job Shadowing

Job shadowing is a common technique used to train employees to execute the same or very similar tasks as the ones assigned to its supervisor. This is one of the most effective training programs available, with a very graphic orientation that shows an intern how to do most tasks by example. It is widely used in restaurant, medical and other skilled trades and has proven effective and

sufficient for many corporations according to Human Resources expert Susan M. Heathfield (2009). In her Human Management series of articles, she provides insight about the pros and cons of job shadowing and other employee training methods (Heathfield, 2009). The first disadvantage would be the need for the intern to execute the same tasks as the supervisor. In my case, and possibly in other cases within GWHCC, the interns have an entirely different line of tasks when compared to the supervisors, who have a more administrative approach. Despite having different job descriptions it is possible that some tasks are shared and job shadowing is still convenient to learn certain procedures, particularly if they are related to manipulating objects, corporate procedures and other office tasks.

The same disadvantage found for being trained on-site by the manager or supervisor is that these are not necessarily capable instructors. Also, they might lack time or can be rotated, negating the possibility of training the intern by example.

Job shadowing was part of my training, as I had to observe my supervisor while she performed tasks in order to be able to replicate them. However, having worked the exact same number of days I had, she was error prone as well, and she lacked the knowledge for certain procedures. This limits job shadowing to very specific tasks, and provides partial training at best.